

SUCCESS STORY

20 YEARS OF AUTOMATED TRANSLATION AT THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Move over Information Society....the European Commission has just celebrated its 20th year of automated machine translation.

Systran, a commercially developed computerised translation tool started producing

'machine translations' for the European Institutions, when the Commission bought the license to use this technology in the mid-1970s. Since then, thanks to DG XIII funding, the Commission has continually improved Systran's processing capability, speed and

vocabulary – by adding millions of words and many new language pairs.

While sceptics are quick to joke about the awkward expressions that sometimes pop out of a first draft Systran translation, it is important to note that this is a translation tool, not a magic box. With 17 language pairs currently available, this system's real strength is its ability to produce a rapid first draft of a document. A growing number of translators prefer to work on Systran output. Leaving the computer to deal with the task of transcribing the words from one language to another, they are free to concentrate on the brain-twisting aspects of the translation procedure.

The real final benefits that Systran delivers are a drastically reduced cost per page and very fast translations – especially for simple routine documents. And the fact that Systran can render rapid and increasingly accurate translations of EU legislative and administrative jargon is in itself a small miracle. Systran's popularity started to grow exponentially in the early 1990s, as the Commission's internal e-mail system became more powerful. Last year some 260,000 pages were run through Systran – proof enough that machine translation is here

to stay. Users value the system's fast response time – roughly 10 minutes per request, with the document returned automatically to the 'customer' by e-mail. A recent survey revealed that Systran is used for three main activities: information scanning (browsing), multilingual drafting and translation pre-processing. The raw machine output can be rapidly post-edited or carefully polished to produce a final, high-quality translation. If an official needs a rough draft for discussion, or simply to understand the general idea of a text drafted outside the Commission, a raw machine translation usually solves the problem.

New languages

The next big challenge is EU enlargement, which will bring up to six new languages and words such as *przekształce* (Polish for 'conversion' – with an accent on the 'l') into the European Union lexicon. To meet this challenge, the Systran team will be looking at the feasibility of a series of new research projects to improve the system's translation and throughput possibilities. The most recent development in the life of Systran, in its commercial guise, is Systranet, a translation service which is being offered as a PC-based version developed and marketed by a Californian software company (see <http://www.systransoft.com/>). These translations cost \$0.01 per word + \$2.00 per transaction. This totals some \$10.00 for an average three page document, as compared to around \$150 for an average 'human translation'.

Finally, the AltaVista Internet search engine company and Systran S.A. – the commercial Systran arm – have joined forces to offer real-time machine translation of web pages via the Internet. This service is free of charge, with restrictions on the size of texts (<http://babelfish.altavista.digital.com>) ■

Lisez alles about it!

For a first-hand look at the latest Systran translations, check the various language versions of IS News, from now on available on our Web Site. Within two days of finalising the English text, the newsletter is translated into French, German, Spanish and Italian with the help of Systran and post-editing by translators, and is posted on the ISPO web site. Point your browser to: <http://www.ispo.cec.be/ispo/newsletter/index.html>

For further information on translation tools, contact: Dimitri Theologitis
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Editorial by Mr Joan Majo
Information Society Forum,
Chairman of the Working
Group on Employment

TOWARD A NEW MODEL FOR EMPLOYMENT CREATION

European Union Member States are currently spending some ECU 200,000 million every year on their employment policies. To further the legitimate political objective of solidarity, two thirds of this amount is currently spent on passive measures, which focus primarily on ensuring minimum levels of income for unemployed people.

Progressively, awareness has been raised and it has been acknowledged that public money is best spent on active measures; those that favour employment, trigger job creation and encourage people to acquire new skills or update their existing ones. The guidelines for national employment policies endorsed by the European Summit on employment in Luxembourg in November 1997 clearly made two points. Firstly, that benefits and taxation systems in the Member States should be more employment-friendly; and secondly – that the proportion of active measures to encourage employment should be drastically increased. Today, genuine efforts are being made by most Member States and this work is being assessed by the European Commission.

Beyond this necessary shift in employment policies, lies another pitfall. The emerging Information Society is creating ever-faster economic and social change, which employment policies must also address. These changes are so deep – affecting the fundamental organisation of our European societies – that the design and means of our governments' employment and learning policies must be designed in a totally new context. Productive business organisation will be increasingly based on factors such as: flexibility, making the best use of human resources, and on the effective (and selective) use of the mass of information that is available. 'Multi-skilling' of employees will become the norm, and life-long jobs exceptional. The boundaries between labour, training and leisure will fade away. Such is the main message conveyed of the "Newark Declaration", which was prepared by the Information Society Forum's Working Group on Employment, and presented to the British Presidency, the Commission, the European Parliament and the 'Employment and Labour Market' Committee of the Council.

The Newark Declaration contains policy recommendations. They call for: the necessary restructuring of our education and training systems; adaptation of the business environment – to make it conducive to companies' flexible organisation and favourable to start-up companies; the need for incentives to training and better use of updated skills in the unfold of professional life; and the need for examples of best practice to drive new ways of working.

The Group stresses that these recommendations are priority actions to be implemented by the Member States. They must become a part of national employment policies, so that all the opportunities created by the Information Society can be grasped – to create a significant reduction of unemployment across the European Union. ■

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

GUIDELINES FOR THE GLOBAL ELECTRONIC MARKETPLACE

Proposed International Charter will facilitate, not regulate

The Information Society Forum, the group which represents all European players in the Information Society, issued a resolution which supports the European Commission's proposal to create guidelines for an open and effective global electronic marketplace.

According to the Commission, the proposed International Charter's primary aim will be to strengthen worldwide cooperation to remove legal uncertainties and develop a consistent approach to developing the electronic marketplace.

The Forum suggests that the Charter deal with issues such as: inter-operable technical solutions; labour law for trans-national work; digital signatures, authentication and liability; intellectual property rights; taxation; Internet domain names; and consumer protection. The Forum shares the Commission's view that the Charter should not create a new international supervisory authority.

Martin Bangemann, the European Commissioner in charge of Information Society issues, received the resolution from the Information Society Forum. He welcomed the Resolution, commenting that the issues mentioned in the declaration should be the major topics on the agenda of next year's conference of private sector representatives, governments and international organisations. With this and a series of related consultations scheduled for the coming months, Bangemann explains that his ultimate goal is to: "...find ways by which policy developments can keep pace with the technological developments of our time." ■

PUBLICATIONS

FIVE-COUNTRY SURVEY TRACKS THE TOP 'IS' PLAYERS

FRANCE AND JAPAN HAVE MADE RAPID PROGRESS. GENERALLY, MANY SMES REMAIN 'AGNOSTIC' TO NEW TRENDS.

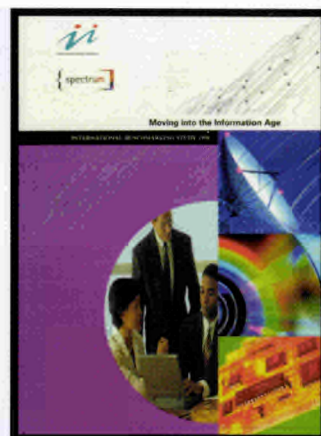
Today's Information Society is not the same set of products and services that it was last year. Neither is companies perception of how it affects their business strategies. Depending on a company's culture and a national government's business awareness, the recognition of the importance of putting the Information Society into practice, varies significantly from one country to the next.

In an attempt to track the progress of companies toward becoming active players in the Information Society, the UK Department of Trade and Industry has commissioned its second yearly International Benchmarking Study: *Moving into the Information Age*.

The survey examines the development of the uptake and ownership (running their own systems) of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the UK, Germany, France, Japan and the United States.

The factors that will stimulate or constrain further development have also been highlighted. The 1997 Survey indicated that, for ICT usage and ownership, the UK was ahead of France, on par with Germany but not as developed as the US and Japan.

This year's survey reveals a rapid development in ICT in all five countries. In particular, Japan has pushed ahead significantly, and now leads the US in many areas. This confirms the findings of last year's report that Japan experienced a slow start, but was set for a rapid uptake of ICTs. France has also grown rapidly in the past year.



The primary findings for the 1,700 companies surveyed are:

- All five countries demonstrate continued progression in the Information Age.
- Japan has come from behind to overtake the US in many areas of ICT usage and ownership – including the number of companies giving their employees access to the Internet (73% vs 57% in the US).
- 52% of very small companies in all countries claim to be indifferent, uncertain or 'agnostic' toward the Information Society. Large companies are showing more enthusiasm for bringing their business and employees on line.
- 39% of UK companies see ICT as having a 'key impact' on competitiveness over the coming two years.
- The number of UK companies with Web sites has grown from 27% to 37% since the last survey. Growth in Japan has jumped from 28% to 45% in the past year.
- Significant barriers still exist to ICT uptake by companies. 36% of all companies surveyed felt that their employees 'did not have a sufficient understanding of these technologies', yet 37% of these employers are still not training their employees.
- Demands from companies' customers and suppliers continue to have an important impact on the decision to invest in information technologies – especially e-mail and EDI. ■

The report is part of DTI's Information Society Initiative Programme for Business (ISI PfB) and is available on their website: (<http://www.isi.gov.uk/isi/bench/>).

CALL FOR TENDER

SURVEY OF EASTERN EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN 'IS'

A Call for Tender will soon be issued by ISPO to select companies to conduct a survey and round-up of existing Information Society projects and developments in the Central and Eastern European and Mediterranean countries. The purpose of this

Call is to extend the ISPO ESIS project (European Survey of Information Society) to these countries, to gather the same level of statistics and information as that which is available for the European Union Member States in the current ESIS survey. ■

Watch the ISPO web site for the publication date and details about the Call: <http://www.ispo.cec.be/esis>

LANDMARK EU DIRECTIVE ON ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES PROPOSED

On 13 May 1998, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a directive aimed at establishing a legal framework for electronic signatures in the European Union. The proposal lays down rules regarding security and liability aimed to ensure that electronic signatures are legally recognised throughout the European Union. The draft directive, which is to come into force by 1 January 2001, follows on from the Commission's Communication on digital signatures and encryption of October 1997 (<http://www.ispo.cec.be/eif/policy/97503toc.html>). The creation of a framework for secure on-line transactions aims to stimulate investment in electronic commerce, which will lead to benefits in terms of growth, competitiveness and jobs. As most EU Member States have not yet adopted electronic signature laws, this proposed directive ensures a harmonious environment from the outset. Electronic signatures allow the recipient of data sent over electronic networks such as the Internet to determine the origin of the data (authentication) and to verify whether the data has been tampered with (integrity). The data is accompanied by a certificate issued by a certification service provider which allows the recipient to check the identity of the sender.

The draft directive is technology-neutral, thus taking into account the rapid pace of technological change. Its scope is limited to the supply of certificates for the public, aimed at identifying the sender of a message. It does not apply to closed user groups such as corporate Intranets or banking systems, where a trust relationship already exists. Certification services can be offered without prior authorisation, but Member States keep the option of setting up voluntary accreditation schemes for service providers. The directive will define essential requirements for certificates and service providers, and establish minimum liability rules for service providers, which would be liable for a certificate's content. It would also ensure that an electronic signature cannot be legally discriminated on the grounds that it is in electronic form. To encourage the uptake of global electronic commerce, the proposal also includes mechanisms for cooperation with third countries, in particular regarding the mutual recognition of certificates on the basis of bilateral and multi-lateral agreements. ■

For more details point your browser to:
<http://www.ispo.cec.be/eif/policy/com98297.html>

BRING YOUR BRIGHT IDEAS TO TELEWORK WEEK

Everywhere,
November 2-9 1998

If you've got bright ideas for teleworking you'll be interested to know that the third Annual European Telework week, being held between November 2 and 9, will showcase hundreds of Teleworking events across the European Union. Why is there no location or venue for the Telework week mentioned in this article? Because the Telework week is just that....a series of simultaneous events that are being held in one place – the Information Society. The benefits of recognition – for your activity and the concept of Telework in general – are substantial. Interest in the event has grown rapidly – from 30 events across Europe in 1995 to 300 last year – which brought together at least 10,000 people. The 1997 Telework Week generated over 400 articles about Telework in the European press, reaching a readership of some 14 million readers, as well as further coverage on local and national radio and television with a combined audience of 18 million Europeans. Telework Week was also covered by specialist publications targeting SMEs and other groups, including Newsletters and Web sites.

Your telework activity could be:

- A roadshow visiting schools, village halls, etc. to inform young



and old of the possibilities of telework.

- Targeted seminars to inform companies of the business techniques involved in telework.
- Radio phone in programmes, to charge the discussion on telework.
- Press conferences with politicians or business personalities supporting the spread of new activities.
- Conferences with expert speakers on specialised topics.
- A demonstration of teleworking activities on the Internet.

or any other project you propose. Plan today, to be sure that the world knows about the advantages of teleworking in November. ■

To learn more about the support services offered by the Telework Week Secretariat, point your browser to:
<http://www.etw.org>



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

EU-RUSSIAN BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

More than 150 business leaders from Russia and the European Union came together in Brussels to discuss industrial cooperation, at the second EU-Russian Industrialists Roundtable. At the meeting, participants exchanged experiences and advice in a series of workshop sessions, and in plenary sessions on investment, trade, management training and development of the Information Society. The Roundtable was co-chaired by J. Ihamuotila, of Neste OYJ, and R.I. Vyakhirev, of Russia's energy company, Gazprom. Co-sponsors were EU Commissioner Martin Bangemann and Minister of Economics of the Russian

Federation, Mr. J.M. Urinson. The co-chairmen issued recommendations aimed at furthering business development in Russia, and between Russia and the European Union. The recommendations provide for follow-up activities and the preparation of a - 3rd Round Table, planned for May 1999 in Russia. It is expected that a steering committee and industrial working groups on energy, transport industries and Information Society cooperation will be created. ■

To obtain texts of the Roundtable's presentations of the Information Society sessions, and a detailed working paper on IS cooperation with Russia, contact Hans-Peter Gebhardt EC DG XIII, Unit IS2,
e-mail: hans-peter.gebhardt@bxi.dg13.cec.be

ISPO CORNER

AWARENESS FOR ECONOMIC REGENERATION

The ISPO-funded FACSI project is bringing a clear explanation of the Information Society to the citizens and businesses of Italy's Asti region. It also serves as a 'roadmap' to help this region through the profound economic transition that it is currently experiencing.

The information products created under this project are a workshop, a seminar and a CD-Rom that explains the benefits of the Information Society and the concept of teleworking, local entrepreneurs and businesses.

The FACSI teleworking component aims to encourage the local population and businesses to adopt these new ways of work organisation to develop competitive new activities.

To spread the word, all the project's information materials are being distributed to the broadest possible audience of local authorities and entrepreneurs. ■

For more information on the project, contact:
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EVENTS UPDATE

INVESTMENT FORUM TO LOOK AT EUROPEAN BRIGHT 'IT' IDEAS

A shortlist of 45 information and communication technology SMEs from across the European Union, and other countries such as Israel, Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Switzerland, will present their brightest business opportunities to a select audience of investors. This unique Investment Forum will be held in parallel with the IST '98 conference, in Vienna between November 30 and December 2.

Participants in the forum will include leading financial experts and industrialists, such as: venture capital and private equity investors, business 'angels', commercial and investment banks, institutional and industrial investors and as well as qualified advisory

and business development executives.

The selection criteria for these 'finalists' includes the quality of the business plan, the quality of company management and the degree to which the business opportunity offers profitable investment perspectives. The pre-selection will be done through two regional forums held across Europe. The finalist companies will be coached in order to help them prepare the presentation of their business plan at the Investment Forum.

The annual IST '98 conference and exhibition is recognised as one of the largest events of its kind in Europe. ■

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This newsletter and previous issues are also available on the web at: <http://www.ispo.cec.be/ispo/newsletter/index.html>

CALENDAR

Citizens and public administration at the information age

Tampere (FI)
18-20 August 1998
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e-mail: malkia@uta.fi
<http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/hallinto/1999-IS-conference>

Kleine und mittlere Unternehmen in der Informationsgesellschaft

Mainz (D)
4 September 1998
EIC Trier, Dr. Wagner
Tel: +49 651 97567 0
Fax: +49 651 97567 33
e-mail: wagner@trnet.de

Infocity@Bristol 98

Bristol (UK)
11-12 September 1998
e-mail: pw@presswise.org.uk

Second European Conference on Research and Advanced Technology for Digital Libraries

Heraklion (GR)
21-23 September 1998
Tel: +30 81 393504
Fax: +30 81 393501
e-mail: ecdil@cc.uoi.gr
www.ics.forth.gr/2EuroDL

2nd European Summer School on Regional Policy of IS and Telecommunication

Alicante (E)
21-24 September 1998
Fundacion OVSI
Tel: +34 965 982040
Fax: +34 965 132218
e-mail: school@ovsi.com
<http://www.ovsi.com/school>

European Local Governments and Regions: strategic planning and deployment of the IS

Brussels (B)
22-23 October 1998
Ms. Sara Riso
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Online Educa Berlin

Berlin (D)
2-4 December 1998
ICEF
Tel: +49 30 3276140
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<http://www.online-educa.com>

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